

Muhammad
-'Aliy-i-Isfahani

`Abdu
's-Salih, the Gardener

Ustád

Ismá'íl

Nabíl
-i-Zarandi

Darví
sh

Sidq
-'Ali

Áqá

Mirzá

Mahmúd
and
Áqá

Ridá

Pidar-Ján
of
Qazvín

Sh
ay
kh

Sádiq
-i-Yazdi

Sh
áh
-Muhammad-Amin

Ma
sh
hadí

Fattah

Nabíl
of
Qá'in

Siyyid
Muhammad

-Taqi
Man
sh
adí

Muhammad
-'Ali
Sabbáq
of Yazd

`Abdu
'l-Ghaffar of
Isfahán

`Alí
Najaf-Ábádí

Ma
sh
hadí

Husayn
and
Ma
sh
hadí

Muhammad
-i-Adhirbayjani

Hájí

`Abdu
'r-Rahim-i-Yazdi

Hájí

`Abdu
'llah
Najaf-Ábádí

Muhammad
-Hadiy-i-Sahhaf

Mirzá

Muhammad
-Qulí

Ustád

Báqir
and
Ustád

Ahmad

Muhammad

Haná-Sab

Hájí

Faraju'lláh

Tafrí

sh

í

Áqá

Ibráhím

-i-Isfahani and His Brothers

Áqá

Muhammad

-Ibrahim

Zaynu'l-Ábidín

Yazdí

Hájí

Mullá

Mihdíy-i-Yazdí

His Eminence

Kalím

(

Mirzá

Músá

)

Hájí

Muhammad

Kh

án

Áqá

Muhammad

-Ibrahim

Amír

Mirzá

Mihdíy-i-Ká

sh

ání

Mi

sh

kín-Qalam

Ustád

`Alí

-Akbar-i-Najjar

Mirzá

Muhammad

, the Servant at the Travelers' Hospice

Mirzá

Muhammad

-i-Vakil

Hájí

Muhammad

-Riday-i-Shirazi

Husayn

Effendi

Tabrízí

Jam

sh

íd

-i-Gurji

Hájí

Ja'far

-i-Tabrizi and His Brothers

Hájí

Mirzá

Muhammad

-Taqi, the

Afnán

`Abdu

'llah

Ba

gh

dádí

Muhammad

-Mustafa

Ba

gh

dádí

Sulaymán

Kh

án

-i-Tunukabani

`Abdu

'r-Rahman, the Coppersmith

Muhammad

-Ibrahim-i-Tabrizi

Muhammad

-'Aliy-i-Ardikani

Hájí

Aqáy-i-Tabrízí

Qulám-`Alíy-i-Najjár

Jináb

-i-Munib, upon him be the Glory of the All-Glorious

Mirzá

Mustafá

Naráqí

Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín

Azím

-i-Tafrishi

Mirzá

Ja'far

-i-Yazdi

Husayn

-Aqay-i-Tabrizi

Hájí

`Alí

-'Askar-i-Tabrizi

Áqá

Alíy-i-Qazvíní

Áqá

Muhammad

-Baqir and
Áqá

Muhammad

-Isma'il, the Tailor

Abu'l-Qásim

of

Sultán

-Abad

Áqá

Faraj

The Consort of the King of Martyrs

Sh

amsu'd-Duhá

Táhirih

Click on any of the numbers below to go to a page of
Memorials of the Faithful
(unformatted):

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

68

69

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

78

79

80

81

82

83

84

85

86

87

88

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

96

97

98

99

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

114

115

116

117

118

119

120

121

122

123

124

125

126

127

128

129

130

131

132

133

134

135

136

137

138

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

151

152

153

154

155

156

157

158

159

160

161

162

163

164

165

166

167

168

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

185

186

187

188

189

190

191

192

193

194

195

196

197

198

199

200

201

202

203

Click on any of the numbers below to go to a chapter of
Memorials of the Faithful
(unformatted):

[1](#)

[2](#)

[3](#)

[4](#)

[5](#)

[6](#)

[7](#)

[8](#)

[9](#)

[10](#)

[11](#)

[12](#)

[13](#)

[14](#)

[15](#)

[16](#)

[17](#)

[18](#)

[19](#)

[20](#)

[21](#)

[22](#)

[23](#)

[24](#)

[25](#)

[26](#)

[27](#)

[28](#)

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

59

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

67

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Proem

This is a book about people who were trying to get into prison rather than to escape from it, because they were prisoners of a great love. Their love was for Bahá'u'lláh, Whom the nineteenth century world bound with chains and tried to silence by shutting Him, ultimately, in the Crusaders' stronghold at 'Akká.

Like the eye of the storm, He is the center of these accounts, but hardly appears in them—remaining, as the Guardian has described Him, “transcendental in His majesty, serene, awe-inspiring, unapproachably glorious.”

The reader will probably find himself in these pages, whether he is the jeweler from Baghdad, one of the dishwashers, or the professor who could not endure the arrogance of his compeers. Mystic, feminist, cleric, artisan, merchant prince are here. Even modern Western youth will be found here, for example in the chapter on dervishes. For this is more than the brief annals of early Bahá'í disciples; it is, somehow, a book of prototypes; and it is a kind of testament of values endorsed and willed to us by the Bahá'í Exemplar, values now derided, but—if the planet is to be made safe for humanity—indispensable. These are short and simple accounts, but they constitute a manual of how to live, and how to die.

The task of putting these biographies into English was given me by the Guardian many years ago, when I was on a pilgrimage to the Bahá'í world center in Haifa. Shortly afterward the Guardian sent me, to Tihrán, the text from which this translation was made. According to its Persian title page, this was the first Bahá'í book to be printed in Haifa under the Guardianship. A Persian introduction states that 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote the book in 1915, and granted permission to M. A. Kahrubá'í to have it published. The text, which is dated 1924, bears the seal of the Haifa Bahá'í Assembly. A second title page, in English,

describes the work as “An account, from the pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, of the lives of some of the early Bahá’í believers who passed away during His lifetime,” although the work was actually recorded from His utterances.

Here, then, almost half a century after His passing, is a new book given to the world by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

We wonder how many of us, at the close of unbelievably painful and arduous years, would devote the waning time not to our own memories but to the lives of some seventy companions, many of them long dead, to save them from oblivion.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was present at many of these scenes, yet time after time He effaces Himself to focus on some companion, often on one so humble that the passing years would surely have refused him a history. And if, to the cynical, these believers seem better than ordinary men, we should remember that the presence of the Manifestation made them so, and that they are being looked at through the eyes of the Master—Who said that the imperfect eye beholds imperfections, and that it is easier to please God than to please people.

Thus the book is still another token of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s partiality for the human race. The love He personified was not blind but observant, not impersonal but warm and tender; it was a continual attitude of unobtrusive care. Such love, from such a Being, does not end with one life span. He left the world half a century ago, and most of those who longed for Him so much that the hostile said they were not Bahá’ís, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ís, are now vanished from our sight. But still, His love is here, for new millions to find.

The translator

Keene, New Hampshire, December 1969

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1

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2

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3

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Pilgrims

Poetry

Presentations

Resources

Reviews

Scripts

Software

Statistics

Study

Talks

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[home](#)

[sitemap](#)

[series](#)

[chronology](#)

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[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

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[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

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[RSS](#)

[new](#)